

NHDAMF's Bureau of Markets is now accepting applications for the certification of organic processors and handlers. As a result of legislation passed during the 2003 legislative session and after developing the rules governing the operation of the program, we are now able to offer certification services to those businesses that process organic food, feed and fiber products.

The bureau has been accredited by the USDA National Organic Program (NOP) to certify organic farming operations since April 2002. Now, this new program enables in-state processors and handlers of organic products to become certified by NHDAMF. Organic food processors and handlers such as bakeries, coffee roasters, beverage producers, salsa makers, cheese plants, pet food manufacturers, fabric assemblers, etc., may need to be certified.

According to the US Organic Food Production Act of 1990 (OFPA), businesses that label products as "Organic," "100 percent organic," "Made with Organic," or similarly, must be enrolled in a certification program conducted by an accredited certifying agency. The federal OFPA provides significant penalties for those who label products as Organic without being certified, unless exempted or excluded by the act.

USDA has accredited a number of state agriculture agencies and private non-governmental certifying agents to provide certification services throughout the country and internationally. Organic producers are free to choose their own certifying agent. The certifying agents verify compliance with the OFPA through inspections and record-keeping reviews.

Accredited certifying agents establish their fees independently of USDA. Some private certifiers charge a certification fee based on a percentage of the gross revenue of the business. NHDAMF fees are based on the actual costs of providing inspection services.

To obtain a copy of the NHDAMF Organic Processor & Handler Standards (rules), for an application to enroll in the program, or for general information about the program please contact Victoria Smith or Richard Uncles at the Bureau of Markets at 271-3685, or by email to:

vsmith@agr.state.nh.us

runcles@agr.state.nh.us